

child safety reporting procedure

overview

Ballarat Clarendon College has a Child Safety Framework that aims to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students in its care. This includes a Child Safety Reporting Policy to which this document is attached. The school's Child Safety Framework relates to all people working with Ballarat Clarendon College students including teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board members, volunteers, Third Party Contractors and External Education Providers.

Any staff member that has formed a reasonable belief that any form of abuse has occurred or is likely to occur (see Child Safety Reporting Policy for definitions), is required to report this regardless of whether they are a mandated professional or not.

In working within a school setting, an individual's moral, ethical and legal responsibilities demand that they act to protect regardless of what role they play in the organisation. The safety and wellbeing of the children in the school's care is always the number one priority and must override any other consideration.

Ballarat Clarendon College embraces diversity and as such the implementation of any policies and procedures should be done with a sensitivity to individual needs and circumstances be they a student's race, colour, sex, sexuality, gender identification, physical or mental disability, religion, national extraction or social origin. Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families have particular cultural needs which must be accommodated in any process. The school will seek to engage appropriate external support for groups where this would be appropriate whenever it is available or requested.

Staff should consult with the student welfare staff if they require support to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented in a way that respects individual needs and circumstances.

key actions

Forming a Reasonable Belief

The standard of reasonable belief does not require that the individual is able to 'prove' their contention, but rather that it is what they believe to be the case. A reasonable belief can be formed due to:

- direct disclosure by a young person (A direct disclosure must always be regarded as forming a reasonable belief);
- a disclosure by an individual relating to another person in either written or verbal form;
- observed behaviour (incident) or changes of behaviour over time, in particular a student becomes withdrawn, their physical appearance changes, their attendance to personal hygiene deteriorates etc.;
- observed injuries consistent with harm being caused by another person; and/or
- inference from school-based work where content leads to a belief of harm or fear of harm.

Once a staff member has formed a reasonable belief, they should desist from further investigative processes. This is a specialist area of work that is not within the domain of staff at a school. At the point a reasonable belief has been formed, the concern should be reported as soon as possible so that formal investigations can be conducted by the relevant authority, if required.

Staff should understand that it is better to raise a concern, even if they are not entirely sure of its validity, than to not raise a concern where a risk exists. Raising child safety concerns is always supported within the organisation.

Any staff member who is concerned for the immediate safety of a child should not hesitate to call 000, as a first step, to ensure the child's safety prior to the implementation of any other process. Staff should make a personal record of their concerns as soon as it is possible to do so. This should include:

- dates and times;
- direct quotes;
- names and places;
- specific words used and their context; and
- timelines.

Once a Reasonable Belief is Formed

Staff are required to act on their belief as soon as is practicable. Action by a staff member can take the form of a direct notification to Child Protection, or informing either Clarendon's Child Protection Officers or the applicable Head of School.

The Child Protection Officers are the School Counsellors and they can be contacted directly or through the link provided in the Complispace policy portal.

The decision regarding the appropriate course of action should be based on risk and urgency. Where there is an immediate concern staff should contact 000, in the first instance, before liaising with school staff.

Information that comes to light outside of hours which suggests short term risk requires the staff member to notify Protective Services immediately.

Information that comes to light during the school day may first lead to consultation with the school's Child Protection Officers or Head of School. This step may be added for the following reasons:

- Child Protection matters are distressing for staff and collegial support is likely to be welcome for staff that are in receipt of information that is challenging to them;
- staff with greater experience and expertise are likely to be able to more clearly outline the concern in language and format that will allow the staff receiving the information to quickly establish an accurate risk assessment;
- the documentation of the process is likely to be more streamlined and accurate when staff with experience of the processes are conducting it; and/or
- the staff member presenting the concern is partially removed from the process, adding to their confidentiality (the school is always happy to be identified as the notifier, but individual staff can have some distance from this).

While staff may find comfort in allowing other designated staff to take control of the process, there are circumstances where the individual staff member must make the report themselves. These include:

- where there is a concern that the designated Child Protection Officer or other senior member of staff has a conflict of interest;
- where a delay in reporting would put the child at unnecessary risk; and/or
- where the staff member does not believe that there is an intention to make a report by the person that the concern was reported to within the school despite the reporting staff member's clear belief of the need to do so.

Making a Report

Staff making a report should be prepared before they do this. They should have the following information documented:

- name and DOB of the child;
- names and addresses of parents;
- names and supporting information of alleged perpetrator/s;
- clear articulation of the concern, how the assessment of the concern has been formulated and the timeline of events;
- action that has been taken to this point; and/or
- any other relevant information.

Contacting Child Protection

- Ring 1800 075 599 during business hours or 131278 after hours.
- Explain that you are ringing to make a report relating to a concern about a young person.
- Have all information at hand and speak to the Protective Services Officer.

Instructions for Staff Making a Report

- answer any questions the Protective Services officer has to the best of your ability.
- as a statutory authority, Protective Services has a right to access any information that will assist in their assessment so do not withhold what is requested.
- state information simply and factually.
- follow any instructions that are provided.
- make a note of the name of the worker that you spoke to and the time and date.

child first

When there is a lack of clarity as to whether an issue constitutes a protective notification, but there are concerns for a student, or belief that a family may need support, Child First may be an appropriate first contact.

Child First will be able to provide feedback about appropriate next steps (including the need for a more formal notification to the Department of Human Services Child Protection Unit if required).

Child First are not an option where there is any suspicion of sexual or physical abuse, but should be considered where the issues presenting might be best managed with specific parent/family support.

Child First can be contacted on 0353 373388 or 1300783341 through Child and Family Services Ballarat.

reportable conduct

In circumstances where there is a reasonable belief that the behaviour of teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board members, volunteers, Third Party Contractors/volunteers and/or External Education Providers has committed reportable conduct, the school is required to make a report to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). The responsibility for this report rests with the Principal.

All staff have an obligation to report concerns that they may have about the conduct of other people working in the school. These concerns can be presented to the Principal directly, Clarendon Child Safety Officers or the concerned staff member’s line manager. In circumstances where a concern exists in relation to the Principal this should be forwarded directly to Chair of the Clarendon Board.

In situations where there are concerns that criminal behaviour may have occurred, whether by staff or students in the school community, Victoria Police will be contacted as soon as practicable. Investigative processes should stop when a reasonable belief that a crime has been committed has been reached to ensure that formal investigative processes are not compromised.

Supporting Documents

- Child Safety Framework
- Child Safety Reporting Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Staff Student Professional Boundaries



Owner: Head of Student Welfare	Approved: Principal	Child Safety Reporting Procedure
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